



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

ICE arrests woman convicted of murdering a pregnant woman in Panama

Woman arrested on Staten Island and placed in removal proceedings

NEW YORK, NY- - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agents today arrested Panamanian citizen and convicted murderer Secundina Santana at her residence in Staten Island and placed her in removal proceedings.

Santana, 45, is a fugitive from justice from Panama where she was convicted of murder for the 1991 stabbing death of Elizabeth Gonzalez Pineda, a woman who was seven weeks pregnant. Santana received a sentence of 15 years for the murder in August 1994. She escaped from custody and fled to the United States where she illegally entered without inspection.

In November 2000, based on a marriage to a U.S. citizen, Santana applied for and received permanent resident status in this country. Five years later, she applied for U.S. citizenship. Based on new fingerprint information, her citizenship application and background checks, her criminal history was identified when ICE checked her fingerprints against Interpol's wanted fugitives list.

This arrest was facilitated by the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Visit Program. Created in January 2004, U.S-Visit collects fingerprints and other biometric data from visitors at U.S.-visa issuing posts worldwide and upon their arrival and departure from U.S. ports of entry. By cross referencing Santana's fingerprints between U.S. Visit and Interpol databases, officials from ICE as well as U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) were able to detect her criminal past.

"Santana entered this country illegally, lied on her application for citizenship, is a convicted murderer and is exactly the type of criminal alien we seek to find and remove from the United States," said New York ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Martin D. Ficke. "This arrest is also an example of our ability to identify, arrest and remove criminal aliens who apply for immigration benefits they don't deserve."

Identity and benefits fraud is growing dramatically. ICE's investigative statistics reflect the priority the agency places on this nationwide problem. Between 2004 and 2005, the number of ICE investigations into these violations has increased from 2,334 to 3,591, while indictments have surged from 767 to 875 and convictions have increased from 559 to 992.

ICE will detain Santana until she has the opportunity to have her case heard before an independent immigration judge who will determine whether or not she will be deported.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.